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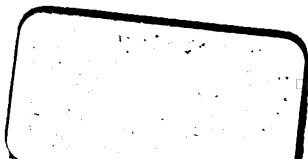
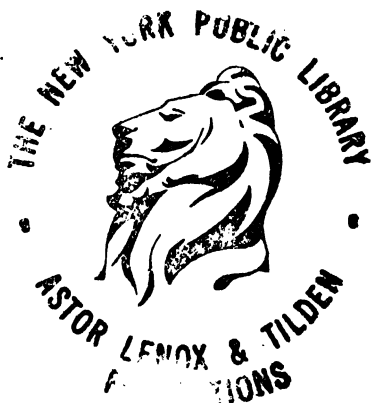
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# FIRST LOVE

*by*

Louis Untermeyer

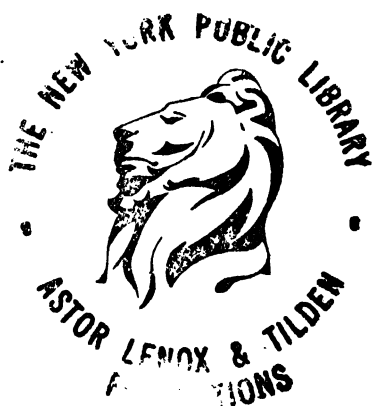




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# FIRST LOVE

A LYRIC SEQUENCE

BY

LOUIS UNTERMAYER



BOSTON

SHERMAN, FRENCH & COMPANY

1911



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**TO  
MY WIFE  
WHATEVER IN THIS  
BOOK IS WORTHY OF HER**



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**TO  
MY WIFE  
WHATEVER IN THIS  
BOOK IS WORTHY OF HER**





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## **FIRST LOVE**



1

THE linnet is tuning her flute,  
The bees are beginning to swarm,  
And the music of blossom and root  
Is throbbing and joyful and warm.  
I am part of the lyrical strife,  
I am one with the voices that sing—  
While even the stones feel a hunger for life  
In the urge and the clamor of Spring!



Oh what has caused the sparrow's mirth  
     That she should sing so light a song—  
 Oh what has come upon the earth  
     That it should laugh the whole day long—  
 Oh who has made his magic thrill  
     The heart of fairy, flower and fawn—  
 I looked behind a rosy hill  
     And saw Him in the dawn.

For it was April—he that comes  
     With laughter on his lyric lips,  
 While every happy zephyr hums,  
     And clouds go by like homing ships.  
 The sullen day, the torpid night,  
     The world's indifferent moods depart,  
 And all things surge with music, light,  
     Dreams—and the April heart.

A NEW religion stirs me now  
With sacred fervor, and I vow  
To be its votary, and share  
With song and sunshine everywhere.

Its ministers are birds and trees,  
Its choir is the holy breeze,  
Its creed: To make the whole world fair  
With song and sunshine everywhere.

This is the faith that I will keep,  
This is the passion that will sweep  
My winter-burdens into air  
With song and sunshine everywhere.

For He is risen, and I sing  
The throbbing ritual of Spring;  
While April moves me, more than prayer,  
With song and sunshine everywhere.

THE bush is in bloom and the tree is in flower,  
 On the lips of a crocus two butterflies  
 swing;  
 My heart is uplift with this beauty and  
 power—  
 And I am eighteen and as young as the  
 Spring!

The winds are conspiring in cavern and grot,  
 The rains are a menace in fallow and firth;  
 The joy of the Spring is foregone and for-  
 got—  
 And I am eighteen and as old as the  
 earth.

ALL the fields are glad again  
    Since the rain;  
All the shepherds and their herds,  
    Brooks and birds,  
Are a singing wave that swells;  
    And the bells  
Have a newer joyful note  
Sounding in each merry throat.

And I, lying on the grass,  
    Saw her pass;  
Saw her face so wistful-wise  
    And her eyes;  
Heard her as she went along  
    With a song.  
And I knew that this was what  
Spring had promised—and forgot.

THERE's something missing in the world,  
 There's something wrong with Spring—  
 The lips of May are cold and curled,  
 She will not deign to sing.  
 There's something common in the breeze  
 That sweeps the tawdry skies,  
 And all the trees' green ecstasies  
 Are hateful to my eyes.

The mirth of earth's a shabby cloak,  
 A thread-bare guise and thin;  
 And every wisp of fading smoke  
 A vision that has been.  
 My heart is old and dull and dumb,  
 My songs are incomplete—  
 She does not come, she does not come  
 Oh will we never meet!

THE broken bow is healed,  
 The wind has lost its sting,  
 And life, long mute in farm and field,  
 Has many songs to sing.  
 Behold, how sweetly is revealed  
 The gentle nursing of the Spring.

The winter-tortured trees  
 Stand straight and free of pain;  
 Despairing rivers, left to freeze,  
 Are warmed to life again.  
 And all the sick world's agonies  
 Have torn the heart of earth in vain.

There is no grass that grows,  
 No freshet running clear,  
 There is no new-born bird but knows  
 The gladness of the year;  
 The bruise and burden of the snows  
 Have left the world without a tear.

Now Fancy tries its wing,  
 Now passions blush and start,  
 While even children, touched with Spring,  
 Whisper and walk apart.  
 And I—I am the only thing  
 Still bearing Winter in its heart.

I LAY full length upon a fragrant lawn,  
     Watching the Dawn  
 Unveil her trembling loveliness and bare  
 Her growing blushes to the placid stare  
 Of lakes, that woke to gaze without surprise  
 Into her own bewildered eyes;  
 Then caught her smile a moment after  
 And broke into a rippling laughter.

And as I dreamed, the mysteries of earth,  
     Unknown since birth,  
 In every tongue were suddenly made clear;  
 Nature translated and I seemed to hear  
 The thousand babel voices of the Spring  
 Each in its speech the others answering,  
 Mingling with songs of vaguely-felt desires  
 A myriad slumbers and a myriad fires.

I heard the buds beside the pasture-bars  
     Speak of the stars,  
 I heard the valley brooklets and the rills  
 Echo the meditations of the hills.  
 The singing leaves like countless tiny lutes  
 Sang of the dreams that stirred the deepest  
     roots,  
 And every beckoning breeze seemed to dis-  
     close  
 The romance of the roadside and the rose.

[ 8 ]

The river grasses murmured for the free

And buoyant sea . . . .

So each one voiced its dream—but not a word

Of love and its wild wonders had I heard;

Dumb and insensate things that could not  
tell

Aught of the theme which Man has sung so  
well!

*I left the place to learn of Love; and after,*

*I heard the lake break into rippling laughter.*



**LIGHTS**

On the heights  
 And stars in every lake—  
 The stillness seems to shake  
     Watcher and sleeper.

Wise  
 Are the skies—  
 But touched with April now  
 Heaven has grown somehow  
     Softer and deeper.

Strange—  
 With the change  
 What secrets lie unfurled!  
 Yea, and I feel the world  
     Closer and keener;  
 Back  
 Of the black  
 And endless veils of Night  
 Have I not glimpsed the Light,  
     Once having seen her.

Earth  
Giving birth  
And death in every wood—  
Marvel misunderstood—  
I know the heart of it;

Life  
And the strife  
Making the mighty wince—  
Have I not felt it, since  
She is a part of it?

Though  
I may know  
Naught of her care and grace  
Still will her slender face  
Rise to o'erwhelm me;  
Still  
Will she fill  
And color all my hours—  
She of whom stars and flowers  
Always will tell me.

Oh woodlands, hang your banners out  
And wave them all till Death;  
Oh winds, exult with me and shout  
Till you are out of breath;  
Oh Spirit of the Spring, employ  
Your every subtle art—  
But you can never match the joy  
That leaps within my heart.

Sing louder, louder till you fail,  
Impulsive little throng;  
Oh wonder-stricken nightingale,  
Is this your wildest song?  
Oh laughing millions everywhere,  
You should be twice as gay;  
Oh what a sky and what an air—  
I saw my love to-day!

It was but yesterday I went  
 Through woods where turmoil ceases ;  
 A golden day was almost spent,  
 The dazzling robe of heaven was rent  
 Into a thousand pieces.  
 And musingly I walked along,  
 Humming a happy song.

And, after threading many a maze,  
 Just how there is no telling—  
 More in a dream than in a daze  
 I looked beyond—and lo, my gaze  
 Fell on her little dwelling.  
 A miracle—a sweet surprise—  
 Breathless, I raised my eyes.

And toward me from a surging sky,  
 There came the sound of singing ;  
 It was my love—she wandered by  
 With half a smile and half a sigh,  
 And passed me, lightly swinging.  
 Then, wrapped in sunset, she became  
 Splendor and singing flame !

I HAVE discovered where she lives  
 And loiter near the place;  
 The thought that I am near her gives  
 Me solace for a space.  
 Here is the gate with rusty springs,  
 Here is the garden small,  
 And here her dress has brushed the things  
 That grow about the wall.

She sees this swallow that returns  
 To nest among the eaves;  
 Her feet have stirred these very ferns,  
 She may have touched these leaves.  
 Her very presence must have blessed  
 These things that fly or crawl;  
 Even the twigs that I caressed  
 She knows, she loves them all.

She is a part of all that grows,  
 Of all that dares and dreams,  
 She is the fragrance of the rose,  
 The soul of laughing streams.  
 And though I never see her near,  
 No sorrow burdens me;  
 Her grace, her charm is always here  
 In everything I see.

THERE is no Death to conquer Spring  
And tear us with an unknown pain—  
For she will always come to sing  
The ancient throbbing back again.  
And love, once gained, will live and bring  
With every year a fairer flower;  
Then why is Youth the only thing  
That comes and dies within an hour!

GREEN is the blooming thicket,  
Green is the budding bough,  
And ivied wall and wicket  
Are green and glowing now.  
The freshening color passes  
Through Spring's own veins, and fills  
Green trees and seas and grasses,  
Green vales and verdant hills.

And while the emerald fire  
Sweeps over all the earth,  
From Winter's gleaming pyre  
Are lit the flames of Mirth;  
And Youth and April Weather  
In ecstasy are seen  
To rise and dance together—  
Green in a world of green.

SWALLOW, tardy swallow,  
 Hasten your returning,  
 Spring's already burning  
 In every heart and hollow.

Swift with exultation,  
 Flames are sweeping over  
 Towns and fields of clover,  
 Men and all creation.

Only she, my own,  
 Greet me unaffected;  
 Still the same—a resurrected  
 Sappho—carved in stone.

Earth and I reprove her  
 But she listens dumbly;  
 Nothing seems to move her—  
 She is too calm and comely . . .

*Leave her, oh leave her,  
 Winter's disdains,  
 Earth, put the fever  
 Into her veins,  
 Lash out the coldness  
 Till with a start,  
 Half-blushing boldness  
 Quickens her heart;*

[ 17 ]



*Burn her with wildness,  
Burn—till the sting  
Rouses her mildness,  
Fires her with Spring!*

Oh she is proud as the virtuous goddess  
    Flashing a fate that is sterner than death;  
Oh she is calm, and her blossoming bodice  
    Never is swayed with a passionate breath.

Oh she is cold as the Moon is to Pierrot  
    Mocking his dreams and his wistful desires;  
And she smiles like a Valkyr smiles on a hero,  
    Watching and waiting the while he expires.

Oh she is cruel, her spirit would harden  
    An angel in tears on a comforting quest,  
But oh she is fair as the dawn in a garden—  
    And Beauty's the virtue surpassing the rest.

"THE river turns to the peaceful breast  
     Of the brooding sea,  
 The red-bird turns to his mate in the nest,  
     The bud to the bee;  
 Oh learn, my love, from this sweet unrest—  
     And turn to me.

"The twilight sinks in the arms of sleep  
     At the day's decline;  
 The spent winds softly sink as they weep  
     In the arms of the pine—  
 Come down, oh love, from your frowning steep  
     And sink into mine.

"The breeze has a tale for the ear of the rose,  
     And her fragrance is stirred;  
 The Spring has a secret that everyone knows—  
     But I have not heard;  
 Oh love, ere the miracle draws to its close,  
     Whisper the word."

WHEN she would go from me, can I reprove  
her;

When she says "No," is there naught I can do?  
Is she too young that my songs do not move  
her,

Or is my tongue unaccustomed to sue?

Ah, but I know of a way that is better,  
I will not show her my grief, but a smile—  
Smilingly, when she would go, I will let her,  
Possibly then she will linger awhile.

UNDER the stars—the wistful, mild May stars  
     In April-haunted skies,  
 There comes a dream of storm and sudden  
     cries,  
 Of flashing faces, and the straining spars  
 That gleam an instant by the pasture-bars—  
     And then the vision dies.

Under the stars—the wistful stars of May—  
     The farm sleeps silently.  
 And oh what should this portent mean to me  
 Here where the world is lost and slips away—  
 Oh what have I to do with storm and spray  
     And children lost at sea!

Under the stars—and nothing moves that mars  
     The landscape as it lies;  
 And yet I start among unanswered cries,  
 Shipwreck and terror, pain and evil wars—  
 Under the stars—the wistful, mild May stars  
     In April-haunted skies.

Away with doleful maundering, away with fret-  
ful days,

Away with all that smacks of grief, of tears  
and banners furled,

An end to dull perplexities, an end to old dis-  
mays,

There is promise in her eyes—there is prom-  
ise in the world.

Her mood is subtly changing; she has whispers  
for me now;

Her eyes meet mine more quickly, and more  
quickly leave my gaze.

Her heart perhaps has melted to a word some-  
where, somehow—

And the thought of her surrender is a thing  
that heals and slays.

The thought of her surrender—can it be, this  
breathless dream—

Is it not a barren splendor, a rainbow of the  
mind;

Have I not been over-eager to discover in the  
gleam

Of friendly looks and casual smiles, all that  
I hoped to find . . .

But away with vague imaginings, away with  
moon-struck Youth,  
An end to maudlin fancies—this day I shall  
be free.  
Is it Love she means or jesting, is it mockery  
or truth?  
I shall mope and sigh no longer—*I shall ask  
her, I shall see!*

"To-morrow—to-morrow—to-morrow—"

It beats like a double refrain  
That blends with a challenge to sorrow,  
A burden of pain.

To-morrow—to-morrow—to-morrow

She said she would answer my prayer.  
And shall I go gently, or borrow  
A conquering air . . .

To-morrow—to-morrow—to-morrow

And every hour is a year.  
'Tis night and the daylight is far—oh  
That morning were here.



My soul, if e'er your eyes were moist,  
 If cares have ever vexed your brow;  
 My songs, if you have ever voiced  
 A single, tender "thou";  
 My heart, if e'er you have rejoiced  
 Be buoyant now.

My soul, how could you ever doubt  
 That she was less than all divine;  
 My heart and songs, how could ye flout  
 My worship at her shrine;  
 For I am hers—oh sing it out—  
 And she is mine.

DAWN—and the vision glorious at last,  
 I feel the sweep of life in every part,  
 I hear the planets rushing through the vast,  
 The mountain-rivers thunder in my heart.  
 The earth is turned to leaping fire and flood,  
 The skies, like waving banners, are unfurled,  
 The winds, the seas, are pounding in my blood—  
 I am the wakened pulse of all the world.

*She is mine—I am ocean and thunder,  
 I am flame in a glory of fire,  
 I am lifted with new-revealed wonder,  
 With gladness too great to desire.  
 Oh fire and flood, let me sweep her  
 With love that no man can divine—  
 Oh stars, let me hold her and keep her,  
 She is mine—she is mine.*

Dusk—and the vision glorious still glows,  
 But softer, gentler on the world it lies;  
 I hear the hours whisper, and the rose  
 Murmurs a breath of perfumed lullabies.  
 I hear the crickets and the early stars  
 Singing their songs amid the twilight-stir,  
 I see the rudest things without their scars,  
 And I have felt the world—because of her.

*She is mine—I am calmness and quiet,  
I am faith, I am peace in the night,  
I am hallowed with godhood, and by it  
We shall win to the worthiest height.  
Oh dusk, make me nobler and deeper  
With love that no man can divine—  
Oh stars, let me hold her and keep her,  
She is mine—she is mine!*

LINGER awhile, oh day of happy tears,  
 Of trembling gladness and of weeping joy;  
 Linger awhile before the twilight fears  
 And the forebodings of the night destroy  
 All that my heart still hears.

All that my heart still hears are broken words,  
 Phrases and tones too sweet to be believed—  
 Half-sighs that fluttered from her lips like  
 birds,  
 Or like some poignant bit of song that  
 grieved  
 In lovely minor thirds.

Day, when thou goest, each morn will seem to  
 say  
 Thou hast come back from strange and dis-  
 tant climes—  
 Thy face shall never fade nor pass away,  
 And thou shalt be re-born a thousand times,  
 Thrice happy, tearful day.

Now leaps the lyric madness  
 From field and sheltered grove;  
 They sing about our gladness,  
 They celebrate our love.

Birds in the distant mountains  
 Among the pine and fir,  
 And laughing, leaping fountains,  
 Are eloquent of her.

Breezes that thread the passes  
 Of forests far above,  
 And leaves among the grasses,  
 Whisper about our love.

Rivers and brooks are theming  
 Our numbers amorous,  
 And lakes that lie a-dreaming  
 Murmur and muse of us.

Bells in the parish steeple  
 Chant us with ringing tongues,  
 And all the merry people  
 Repeat our happy songs.

But oh my soul is harried  
 With this pervading doubt—  
*When we are dead and buried*  
*What will they sing about?*

[ 30 ]

Down in the vale the singing birds have nested;  
 I hear them every morning at their play  
 Singing about our windows unmolested—  
 But thou and I are happier than they.

Out in the woods I heard the breezes telling  
 How glad they were now Spring had come to  
 stay;  
 With light and happy airs their songs were  
 swelling—  
 But thou and I are happier than they.

Close by the lake I listened to the flowers  
 Breathing their joy of every shining day;  
 "None happier than we, no joy like ours"—  
 But thou and I are happier than they.

Last night I heard two angels beat their  
 pinions  
 And sing "Praise God; His smile and gentle  
 way  
 Make us the happiest things in His domin-  
 ions—"  
*But thou and I are happier than they!*

Our love is like the soothing rain  
 That follows clouds and thunders,  
 It comes to fill the world again  
 With fresh and blooming wonders.  
 It sweeps away all baser things  
 That flourished once unthwarted,  
 And washes clean the low and mean  
 Until they glow transported.

Our love is like the kindly snow  
 That covers great and small things,  
 Whose very softness seems to throw  
 A glamor over all things.  
 It makes of every common spot  
 A holy thing and tender,  
 And every dark and ugly mark  
 Is hidden by its splendor.

Our love is like the steadfast sun,  
 A force to fire and quicken  
 The sluggish joys that feebly run  
 Through all that droop or sicken.  
 And yet, although we need it most,  
 We see it never; knowing  
 That none may gaze upon its face—  
 It is too great and glowing.

WHO has heard the Night  
     And the Silence singing,  
     Who has heard the meadows ringing  
         When the hills rejoice;  
 Who has heard the bright  
     Songs when stars are christened—  
     *Every being who has listened*  
         *To her voice.*

Who has seen how Sleep  
     Ended Day's dissembling,  
     Who has seen the wistful, trembling  
         Souls of butterflies;  
 Who has seen the Deep  
     When the skies dissever—  
     *All the people who have ever*  
         *Seen her eyes.*

Who has felt the birth  
     Of all sweeping powers,  
     Who has felt the thrill that towers  
         To the worlds above;  
 Who has felt the earth  
     When one dear head is nested—  
     *Only I, for I have rested*  
         *In her love.*



“ONLY of thee and me the nightwind sings,  
 Only of us the sailors speak at sea,  
 The earth is filled with wondered whisperings  
 Only of thee and me.

“Only of thee and me the breakers chant,  
 Only of us the stir in bush and tree;  
 The rain and sunshine tell the eager plant  
 Only of thee and me.

“Only of thee and me, till all shall fade;  
 Only of us the whole world’s thoughts can  
 be—  
 For we are Love, and God Himself is made  
*Only of thee and me.*”

OUR phrases fail, our very murmurs cease;  
 Held are our fancies in the simple thrall  
 Of evening's solace and the twilight's peace—  
 Peace and a tender hush that seems to fall  
 Like dark wings over all.

A low wind falters, like a breath held back;  
 Faint rumblings die; a distant window glows;  
 And even, as the hills turn softly black,  
 The nightingale forgets to sing, foregoes  
 His raptures to the rose.

And now the stillness speaks to deep and height,  
 And we—with breathless bird and trembling  
 star—  
 Worship while Silence sings and holds the  
 Night;  
 Silence, whose secret songs are fairer far  
 Than God's own voices are.

Roses—they are here!  
 Here in all their splendor,  
 Royal and austere  
 Delicate and tender;  
 Each and every kind  
 June at last discloses—  
 Everywhere I look I find  
 Roses—roses.

Rose whose heart is red  
 Like the blood of heroes,  
 Rose with yellow head,  
 And the modest tea-rose,  
 Grow beside the wall  
 Or in garden closes,  
 Till the teeming world is all  
 Roses—roses.

Roses proud and bright,  
 Scorning to be lowly,  
 Roses meek and white,  
 Holiest of the holy,  
 Tell me is it true  
 That, though none supposes,  
 Summer decks her bed with you—  
 Roses—roses.

Roses pale and thin,  
Faintly touched with fire,  
Roses that have been  
Wedded to the briar,  
Overrun the land,  
For my joy reposes  
Here 'mid Song and Sunlight, and  
Roses, roses, roses.

THEY say that she is fickle,  
That all my love is vain,  
That ere the shining sickle  
Is hushing down the grain,  
She will betray and show her  
Unfaithfulness to me—  
How little do they know her,  
For that could never be.

And so the foolish prattle  
Falls on a careless ear,  
For all their tales and tattle  
Are laughable to hear.  
Such gossip does not hold me;  
For that she loves me well  
Her eyes and lips have told me—  
What more is there to tell?

I LOVE the murmur that begins  
 Among the reeds and 'celloes,  
 When all the varied violins  
 Tune up among their fellows.  
 I love the little pause—for then  
 What joy the short suspense is ;  
 But oh, the leaping pulses when  
 The overture commences.

I love each heart-beat of the drum,  
 Each breath when flutes are dying,  
 The world, I feel, is overcome  
 When clarinets are sighing—  
 I love the grandiose sweep of strings  
 That tears me with its passion—  
 (Save one) there are no nobler things  
 For God or man to fashion.

And this would be my dearest choice—  
 I would give Music's splendor  
 To watch her sing—to hear her voice  
 In some old song and tender ;  
 I would give every trumpet-call  
 To hear one ballad ringing  
 From her who cannot sing at all  
 And does not care for singing.

DEAR, since we both are held in Love's command,  
 Why all this idle speech and feigned surprise;  
 See, see how near, how breathless-close we  
 stand—

Open thy eyes!

Dear, thou art grown so careful of thy grace,  
 Thou hoardest, like a miser, all thy charms;  
 Cease weighing every kiss and swift embrace,  
 Open thy arms.

Dear, I have gained thy heart but not thy side,  
 Now must the struggle end, and thou give  
 o'er—  
 I am Love-crowned—I cannot be denied,  
 Open thy door!

IN each other's arms we lay,  
    In each other's arms we slumbered;  
    And like waves, unknown, unnumbered  
Visions rose, and died away.

And at last I woke and wept,  
    Wept till I was worn and breathless;  
    Wept because I had been faithless—  
I had sinned the while we slept.

For I dreamt of woods astir,  
    Moonlit seas and great expanses,  
    Dreamt of music and romances—  
And my dreams were not of her.



EVERY night I climb the stair,  
 And with every fresh ascending  
 Comes the moment of despair.  
*Will she meet me—will she dare*  
 And each night (oh happy ending)  
 She is there!

People fear the house—they say  
 It has stood unclaimed, unwanted  
 Since a dying lover lay  
 While he heard his love betray;  
 Sprang up—*and the rooms are haunted*  
*To this day.*

But we come here where no eye  
 Watches us, where all that hovers  
 Over us is evening, shy  
 Passion and a friendly sky—  
 What care we for faithless lovers,  
 She and I?

Splendidly Night sings one tune  
 For us and all eager lispers;  
 And our voices falter, soon  
 We sit trembling-dumb with June . . .  
 Then come longings, broken whispers  
 And the moon.

ONE perfect week—one week of joy untainted  
 When every daybreak whispered rapturous  
     news,  
 When Life and Love were gloriously painted  
 In unimagined tones and sparkling hues,  
 When we were gods—or spirits newly sainted.

One perfect week—it ended but this morning,  
 With all the dreams of a transfigured earth.  
 They came again with tales and words of warn-  
     ing  
 How that her love was light and little worth;  
 And oh I hearkened, I who had been scorning.

One perfect week—to think it should have  
     ended—  
 To think that Spring had fired the earth in  
     vain,  
 That all the marching years serene and splen-  
     did,  
 By one stray doubt should now be wholly  
     slain.  
 And yet—cannot a shattered faith be mended?

ONCE more are the glorious  
 Wonders amassed—  
 Love was victorious,  
 Doubt did not last.  
 The days I abhorred  
 Are forgotten and past;  
 Faith is restored.

I feared to speak to her,  
 I, with my shame—  
 Mournful and meek to her  
 Slowly I came;  
 I told of my doubt  
 And awaited her blame;  
 She did not cry out.

She grew not wild at me;  
 Shaking her head  
 She only smiled at me  
 Softly, and said,  
 "Words, words, my adored,  
 Here are kisses instead"—  
 Thus Faith was restored.

I toss upon my bed, am burned and chilled—  
 She sits beside me sometimes, smoothes my hair,  
 And even as she tends me, phantoms stare  
 And whisper shameful things I thought were  
     stilled.

*“My love (she speaks—and what has changed  
     her smile)  
 I must be going (can these be her kisses)  
 I have been here an hour—quite a while  
 For such a clear and joyful day as this is.”*

About my head the grinning planets waltz,  
 And nameless things point at her lips with  
     scorn;  
 I try to call, to cry out “It is false”—  
 But something chokes me—I am sick and worn.

LAST night we walked among the paths of air;  
 The earth with all its rude and ancient scars  
 Had faded out, and there was nothing there  
 But starlight and the stars.

Each star stood planted like a budding shoot,  
 And on the ground of Heaven a crescent  
 lay—  
 Lay like the rind of some exotic fruit  
 A god had thrown away.

And further still we wandered till we came  
 Upon the very burning edge of space,  
 And saw the unborn worlds still wrapped in  
 flame  
 Hiding God's face.

And then my soul in agony and fear  
 Turned to my love; but oh, my love had  
 gone—  
 The skies were empty, terrible and drear  
 —And I was there alone!

“WHILE the world is soothed with sleep,  
 Wrapped in fever I am lying,  
 And I hear the angels weep—  
 Who is it that lies a-dying?”  
*“Dearest, dearest,  
 What thou hearest  
 Are the winds that wander sighing.”*

“Nay, for I can see his face,  
 Burning with its fearful story;  
 Look—it glares at me through space  
 Like a death-head, scarred and gory.”  
*“Dearest, dearest,  
 What thou fearest  
 Is the moon in all its glory.”*

“Woman, hush; I hear him now  
 Crying ‘I have come to kill thee.’  
 And his blade is at my brow;  
 Now does fear and anguish fill thee?”  
*“Dearest, dearest—  
 ’Twas the merest  
 Touch—I kissed thy brow to still thee.”*

COME, oh Love, my best physician,  
 Help me—I am sore distressed;  
 Come and cure this wild suspicion  
 That is tearing in my breast;  
 Rid me of this premonition—  
 Give me rest.

Thoughts that thrust my heart like sabers,  
 Take them all away with you—  
 Let me face the meddling neighbors—  
 Let me tell the carping crew  
 “See—in spite of all your labors  
 ’Tis not true!”

AUTUMN has come—to-day I heard it all—  
Aye, while the woodland spirits held their  
breath  
The young trees trembled and a birch let fall  
Some yellow leaves in nervous fear of death.  
Yet Summer lives within my heart, for still  
The lover's magic lingers in her lips,  
And oh she charms away the thoughts that  
chill  
With songs of Springtime in her finger-tips.



UNDER the cover of the soothing Night,  
I bared my heart with all its woe;  
I bared my heart that she might know  
The fears that poisoned each delight,  
And why I suffered so.

Under the cover of the soothing Night,  
I told my trouble like a child  
In broken sentences and wild,  
She was not moved—with eyes still bright  
She looked at me and smiled.

Under the cover of the soothing Night,  
My love and I in anger went,  
And when my storm of words was spent  
Her hand within my hand lay light—  
And I was well content.

WHEN the Dusk enshrouds  
Visions sharp and hateful,  
When Night's blurring fingers  
Smooth each tawdry spot,  
Then the heavy clouds  
Lift and leave me grateful,  
And the fear that lingers  
Is forgot.

When the day is near  
And an hour thereafter  
Still the earth inherits  
Peace and calm delight,  
Then afresh and clear  
Comes her sunny laughter—  
And my stricken spirits  
Long for Night.

AN hour before the challenging gleam  
Of dawn that heralds the day,  
My love awoke in the midst of a dream  
And turned to where I lay.

I felt her breath grow wild and warm  
And her arms about me twine,  
And she whispered a name as she turned to my  
arm—  
A name that was not mine.

And then she slept at my breast as fast  
As though she were never so dear;  
But I knew that the glory of Love had passed,  
And I knew that the end was near.

SHE has left me for a while—  
 Not in anger or in passion—  
 Left me, saying with a smile,  
 “Love is out of fashion;  
 ’Tis a garment only meant  
 For the minstrel and romancer”—  
 And I watched her as she went,  
 Struggling, speechless for an answer.

Now I wander to and fro,  
 Up and down the ruined orchard,  
 And I rave and scarcely know  
 Why I am so tortured.  
 Does she mean to tear my heart  
 All afresh with this new flaying,  
 Or, I wonder, is it part  
 Of a game she tires in playing.

I SENT her a fortnight ago  
     A lily, a rose and a song;  
 Three fair little symbols to show  
     That Love had forgiven the wrong.  
 And I said to the flowers, "*Be fair*,"  
     And I said to the song, "*Be my voice*";  
 And I took and I placed them with care  
     In a book that had made her rejoice.

To-day she returned them to me  
     Unanswered, untouched and untried—  
 And I wept, when I found them, to see  
     My three little tokens had died.  
 Voiceless they died in the dark,  
     The flowers for lack of a tongue;  
 But the song had the soul of a lark—  
     And the song had not even been sung.

My soul is sick of roses,  
Of lilies proud and pale—  
In scented garden closes  
The old-time beauties fail.  
And though the spell reposes  
On every flower that grows,  
My soul is sick of roses  
Since she has scorned the rose.

My soul is sick of singing,  
Of whispered strains and sighs;  
Like kisses cloyed but clinging,  
The spell of Music dies.  
And though the world is ringing  
With all its lyric tongues,  
My soul is sick of singing  
Since she has scorned my songs.

WHEN the August days were in April mood  
I mind a morning of amethyst,  
When the slender trees on the hill-top stood,  
Ghosts of green in the silver mist.

The scene is the same—it is August still—  
There's mist—but I look for the magic in  
vain;  
The dawn is a blur, and there loom on the hill  
Ghosts of gray in the sagging rain.

MOUNT up my songs, mount up to her  
Upon your wingéd phrases;  
Each lyric be a chorister  
That only chants her praises.  
Oh steal into her thoughts and sing  
The strains that used to win her,  
Until you have revived the Spring  
And found the heart within her.



NIGHT, sing to her  
 All of thy songs.  
 Night, bring to her  
 Dreams that will cling to her,  
 Dreams that will move her with tears for my  
 wrongs.  
 Night, sing to her.

Night, care for her—  
 All of her sins,  
 Night, bear for her—  
 Beauty's a prayer for her,  
 Beauty's a prayer which she ends and begins—  
 Night, care for her.

Night, sing to her  
 All that has lain  
 Like a dead thing to her—  
 Bring the lost Spring to her;  
 Sing the heart back to her bosom again—  
 Night, sing to her.

*"Love's a garment only meant  
For the minstrel and romancer."*

This is all that she has sent  
To my pleadings as an answer.

How the words come back again,  
Still as careless, still as bitter—  
Like a harsh and mocking strain  
Played upon a tinkling zither.

Like a prisoner chained alone,  
Dullness binds me, wrist and ankle—  
All the evil thoughts are gone  
But the words remain and rankle.

*"Love's a garment (so it went)  
For the minstrel and romancer—"*  
Aye—the robe was never meant  
For the nightshift of a dancer.

I HATE her soul—'tis like some poisoned  
flower—

A blight, a curse, a brand upon her brow ;  
But never, even in our dearest hour,  
Were all her charms as maddening as now.

If God last night had raised His hand  
     And suddenly withdrawn the light,  
 If He had swept the stars like sand  
     Into a corner of the night;  
 If He had held the meteors back  
     And torn the moon from out the skies,  
 The darkness would have been less black  
     Than was the earth before my eyes.

All day I heard an evil wind  
     Echo a thousand hateful views,  
 In every face I seemed to find  
     The bearer of some dreaded news.  
 All day in mad review there passed  
     Portents and rumors wild and drawn,  
 And then—the dream come true at last—  
     Her house was dark—and she was gone.

Gone—and I sink beneath the press  
     Of bitterness that naught controls;  
 Gone—and this petty faithlessness  
     Destroys a universe of souls;  
 It shakes one's faith in all things pure,  
     It taints with cynic gall the sweet—  
 If love like hers cannot endure,  
     Is life itself as much a cheat?

God—I can scarcely grasp it yet,  
 It is too black to be;  
 The ways are darkness, fear-beset,  
 And not a hand is reached to me—  
 I knew the world might leave me thus,  
 But of all others—she!

If I could only curse and smite  
 If I could only rail—  
 But here I sit alone and write  
 The thoughts that make me gasp and pale;  
 Wild and blaspheming things I write,  
 And watch the sunset fail.

I watch the scattered little swarm  
 Troop homeward through the mists,  
 And there a boy has claimed an arm  
 Of one who smiles and scarce resists—  
 How long until she plays him false,  
 I think, and clench my fists.

And here, another happy two  
 Come talking secretly.  
 Oh lad, before this month is through,  
 Whose will her fluttering glances be—  
 Love lightly then, with laughing lips,  
 But never love like me.

Lest all day in a cankered mind  
Distrust war with despair;  
Lest evil conquer, and you find  
In eyes that once seemed clean and fair  
Deceit, the mockery of Love—  
And falseness everywhere.

*God—I can scarcely grasp it yet,  
It is too black to be;  
The ways are darkness, fear-beset,  
And not a hand is reached to me—  
I knew the world might leave me thus  
But of all others—She!*

God made her when he dreamed his fairest  
 dream,  
 And called the angels that they might re-  
 joice;  
 God sang into her heart, and lo, the theme  
 Lives in her swaying voice.

God made her when He breathed His softest  
 word,  
 Shaping her gentler than His gentlest ways;  
 God blessed her, and the very suns were stirred  
 To rapture at her gaze.

God is so good He would not harm a flower,  
 At evil only His creation halts—  
 Oh then what spirit, what malignant power  
 Could make her soul so false?

SHE loved me? Nay, she never did,  
She only played at loving;  
Her heart was quite too small and light  
For aught but mild reproving.

I knew it even from the first,  
Ere she grew cold and ashen—  
For when we kissed I felt we missed  
The nobler part of Passion.

There were no bonds of common cares,  
No dreams, no kin devotions—  
And in her heart there was no part  
For wild and deep emotions.

Love? It was but a little gift  
One gives to each newcomer—  
It was a thing that came with Spring  
And went within a Summer.



Oh who are we that we are given Love—  
 What whim of God's was this that we should  
     know  
 A leaping fervor and a fearless glow  
     That is not known above;  
 We are not clean and pure enough a race  
     To look upon its face.

Oh who are we that we should have all this—  
 This joy, this glory, this divine appeal,  
 This fire that God Himself can never feel,  
     This sudden power and bliss.  
 Why are we burned and blessed and burdened  
     thus—  
     It is too great for us.

IN the woods the little elves  
     Hide themselves  
 Under mossy rock and mound,  
     Under ground;  
 And they frolic as they play  
 Through the night and all the day—  
 Merrily the little elves  
     Sport themselves.

When an elfin (so they say)  
     Loves a fay  
 They will kiss and find a grot—  
     And if not,  
 Neither sighs nor pines away,  
 Neither ceases from its play . . .  
 Oh, what things could men themselves  
     Learn from elves!

'Twas in the sunny weather I threw my heart  
away,

I tossed it to the Springtime, and the thou-  
sand shapes of joy—

And who should chance to find it but a woman  
who, they say,

Had lacked a heart herself and so she took  
the pretty toy.

'Twas in the cloudy weather I found my heart  
again;

It came back to my window, complaining bit-  
terly—

It came back bruised and begging, haggard and  
torn with pain;

But I laughed and let it perish—what use  
was it to me?

A MEETING—a sighing—  
A deal of lament—  
A little denying—  
A final consent—  
A kiss and a quarrel—  
“Oh Powers above!”  
The tale has no moral—  
And this is Love.

YEA, though I hate her with a deathless hate,  
I shall not curse at her nor yet her kind;  
For who would rail and scoff at one whose fate  
Was to be maimed or blind?

Such lives receive our pity—not our scorn,  
We help them make their broken pleasures  
whole;  
And shall I harm her then—she who was born  
A weak and crippled soul?

BREEZES, be still—

Bear not her perfidy abroad,  
Lest birds that innocently thrill  
Should cease to sing with God.

Flowers, be brave—

Fade now and never bloom again,  
Lest happy hearts should find you grave  
And learn your secret pain.

Stars, close your eyes—

Do not betray the world's disgrace,  
Lest ocean lift up to the skies  
A horror-stricken face.

Dreams, you must die—

No more my bitter thoughts shall move,  
Lest all an outraged world deny  
The miracle of Love.

THROUGH Time unborn, undying,  
The waters wail and weep,  
They never cease from crying—  
They cannot even sleep.

Their anguished cry is heard in  
The heaven and earth below,  
And none may know their burden  
And none may know their woe,

But I—who would be lying  
Where they, my brothers, weep,  
Who never cease from crying  
And cannot even sleep.

UNREST is laid upon me like a blight.

When I recall her wrong, her false embrace,  
A sudden fury shakes me in the night

And then—the quiet beauty of her face.

Mood follows mood; my world is overcast

With too much brooding on a woman's  
frown;

Enough of lonely sorrow—and at last

I have gone to the town.

Faces, everywhere faces; surge on surge

The human billows thunder through the  
street;

What ocean trembling upon what a verge,

What roaring seas, what tides that storm  
and beat.

Faces and towers, cars and women whirl

Everywhere, endless—till my senses seem

Lost amid odors, lights and sounds that swirl

As in a dizzy dream.

A dream that I have dreamed—and now made  
plain

That nightmare flash beneath the mild May  
stars!

Here are the straining faces, here the pain,

Here are the shipwrecks and the evil wars.



Here do I move among unanswered cries,  
Here in the town of lives outlived and vain,  
The dream, the storm, the fear, the strange-lit  
skies,  
Sweep over me again.

And I had come for pleasure, for relief,  
To gaudy crowds and over-brilliant lights—  
Better the gray field and the quiet grief  
Than this loud mockery of city nights.  
The veins of town are poisoned with decay,  
Its heart is throbbing with a futile stir . . .  
What must the city do to those that stay—  
*What has it done to her?*

I WANDER homeward, many a mile,  
 Alone and in the noon of night;  
 The Moon accosts me with a smile—  
 I am so pale and white.

“Why are you here,” She asks me, “Why  
 Do you not slumber ere I wane?”  
 Alas—She does not know that I  
 Can never sleep again.

The houses stand a somber host,  
 No sound the dreaming night invades;  
 And like a mournful moonlit ghost  
 I steal among the shades.

There's not a soul that roams abroad—  
 The shadows crouch austere and stark,  
 The very trees are overawed  
 And huddle in the dark.

There's not a star but finds its lake—  
 Night pillows every restless head,  
 And I alone am left awake—  
 Oh God—that I were dead!

THERE'S a garden, a vale  
     Where no nightingale sings,  
 And it nurtures the pale,  
     And the strangest of things,  
 For the folk are all drones  
     And the trees have no boughs  
 In the Valley of Bones.

There's a garden that blooms  
     With the tears of distress,  
 And the trees are the tombs  
     That will never grow less,  
 And the flowers are stones  
     That blossom and blanch  
 In the Valley of Bones.

There's a garden that blooms  
     Where all bitter things cease;  
 A vale that assumes  
     All the beauties of Peace,  
 For no one atones,  
     And no one repents,  
 In the Valley of Bones.

I stood within the city of the dead  
 And walked awhile among the little coombs,  
 The winds of dawn were waking as I read  
 The legends on the tombs.

Here was the mausoleum of a priest,  
 Here were the graves of those who fought  
 and bled,  
 And here lay one who builded West and East—  
 His was a splendid bed.

But only one it was that made me pause—  
 A granite slab scarce two feet high and wide,  
 Hidden away, because its owner was  
 A common suicide.

And there I sat, and wondered why he died,  
 And watched the weary stars grow dull and  
 dim;  
 And how I yearned to have him at my side—  
 To sit and talk with him . . .

ALL night long I heard the rain  
     Calling me—  
 Wake and weary, worn with pain,  
 All night long I heard the rain  
 Sobbing to the same refrain  
     Endlessly.

And when I could bear no more,  
     When the call  
 Grew into a frenzied roar,  
 I arose, and blindly swore  
 I would end it—have it o'er  
     Once for all . . .

In the streets I woke from swoon  
     Suddenly;  
 For the rain had changed its tune  
 To a simple, soothing croon—  
 And a kindly mother-moon  
     Smiled on me.

And into the night, my mad  
     Thoughts were hurled.  
 Like a child that has been bad;  
 Somewhat shamed and somewhat sad  
 Back I crept, at peace and glad  
     With the world.

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THANKS to God I did not die  
 After my despair;  
 Yesterday, bewildered, I  
 Saw the world turn fair.  
 Saw my lost one—saw her face  
 After all these years.  
 Lo, and as she met my gaze  
 In her eyes were tears.

Tears—in eyes that never wept!  
 Tears—that naught could start!  
 Oh what miracle had swept  
 Skies to wake her heart.  
 Something, not of her control,  
 Changed her even now;  
 Something finer—call it soul—  
 Lay upon her brow.

Thanks to God I did not die  
 In that bitter mood;  
 Thanks to God indeed that I  
 Saw that life was good,  
 Saw that still my hopes might breast  
 Countless waves of years—  
 Aye, for God Himself has blessed  
 Love re-born in tears.

THE world is ours again—  
 Ours is the heavenly rout—  
 For, as the healing rain  
     Freshens the rose,  
 Sadness has made us whole  
     After the bitter drought,  
 And the despairing soul  
     Blossoms and glows.

*Sing, heart, sing, lips, sing, promise of the mor-  
 row,  
 Love is not Love that has not tasted sorrow.*

All, all is ours again—  
 The hour with wonder fraught—  
 The passions near to pain  
     We feel anew;  
 For lovers need the years  
     Of tender speech and thought,  
 But Love itself needs tears  
     And suffering too.

*Sing, heart, sing, lips, sing, promise of the mor-  
 row,  
 Love is not Love that has not tasted sorrow.*

The world is ours again—  
The world and its belief;  
The purpose is made plain  
Below, above.  
It only needed this—  
This miracle of grief—  
To make our wayward bliss  
A perfect Love.

*Sing, heart, sing, lips, sing, promise of the mor-  
row,  
Love is not Love that has not tasted sorrow.*



## ENVOY

*So end the lyrics of my earliest passion—  
First love, with all its fever and its fears—  
So wakes the new love in a nobler fashion,  
So die the little griefs and shallow tears.*

*But Joy will live and Spring can never perish—  
Youth in my heart will burn until I die;  
And all the beauties that my soul may cherish  
Will fill a richer earth and vaster sky.*

*For now Love comes with all the early fire,  
The exultation and the leaping joy,  
Blended with something homelier and higher—  
Peace and a faith the years cannot destroy.*









